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SUBJECT The CIA Manual In Nicaragua

DON FARMER: One issue raised in last night's debate is the CIA manual produced for rebels in Nicaragua.

There are more questions tonight on the campaign trail and in Washington. We begin in the capital with Bernard Shaw.

BERNARD SHAW: Two Senators briefed by CIA officials this afternoon say that CIA manual urging the neutralization of Nicaraguan officials was approved here in Washington. Our congressional correspondent, Mary Tillotson, has the story.

MARY TILLOTSON: In the second and final presidential debates Sunday night, President Reagan was asked about that CIA manual urging the administration-supported Contra rebels in Nicaragua to use political terrorism to undercut the Marxist Sandinista government.

THE PRESIDENT: I have ordered an investigation. I know that the CIA is already going forward with one.

We have a gentleman down in Nicaragua who is on contract to the CIA, advising supposedly on military tactics, the Contras, and he drew up this manual. It was turned over to the agency head in -- the CIA in Nicaragua to be printed, and a number of pages were excised by that agency head there, the man in charge, and he sent it on up here to CIA where more pages were excised before it was printed.

TILLOTSON: Two members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence who were briefed by CIA officials Monday afternoon said that the expurgated version of the manual

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approved in Washington and returned to Central America for use by the Contras still contained a recommendation to, quote, "neutralize Sandinistas."

Georgia Democrat Sam Nunn says that in the context, that reference to "neutralization" is inappropriate and offensive.

SENATOR SAM NUNN: I think there are certain interpretations that could lead one to believe that there was language to that that would contravene by implications the President's order against anyone directly and indirectly in our government participating in or encouraging assassinations.

TILLOTSON: Wyoming Republican Malcolm Wallop said neutralization could mean something more benign than murder.

SENATOR MALCOLM WALLOP: A variety of ways in which to neutralize the effectiveness of an -- of an official. You can compromise him slightly less ambitiously than Astorga did General Varga, but you can clearly do that. You can catch them in a line. You can, indeed, kidnap them and move them from the area of operation. you can....

TILLOTSON: Nunn and Wallop say the freelance CIA employee who is suspected of having written the original version of the manual has now been suspended.

Senators Nunn and Wallop said they're persuaded, based on the briefing, that the CIA manual with its reference to neutralization was not approved at the CIA level, even approaching that of Director William Casey. But both Senators say they do still have several questions about the manual, questions they hope will be answered in the two separate investigations launched last week by President Reagan. The Senators said they hope those investigation will be complete before the November 6th presidential election.

Mary Tillotson, CNN, Capitol Hill.